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STATE FOR IIP/IR BCONATY, EUR/PPD MCROUCH,
EUR/CARC BHUNT, EUR/PPD, SALTMAN-WINANS, EUR/PPD LHELLING
ROME FOR IRO LHOHMANN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FY 2009 Request for Sustaining Funds-American Corners
Greece

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11. Introduction and Summary: Embassy Athens requests \$58,340 in FY09 funds to strengthen programs at the six American Corners (ACs) in Greece: Xanthi (northeastern Greece), Veria (northwestern Greece), Sparta (southern Greece), Corfu (western Greece), the Hellenic American Union (HAU) in central Athens, and the American Corner in the wider Athens municipality of Nea Philadelphia. Requested funds will be used for participation of AC Directors in a regional training workshop organized by IRO Laura Kaspari-Hohmann; a series of storytelling presentations and workshops at Veria, Xanthi, Nea Philadelphia, and Sparti; speaker programming; book orders; and equipment upgrades. All our ACs and their programming specifically fit into Post's PD program through outreach to diverse, critical audiences, including youth and Muslims; and by ensuring that popular English Language teaching materials are widely available in the major regions of Greece. End Introduction and Summary.

2008 Achievements: Integration and Sustainability

12. Post continues to coordinate ACs with Mission priorities and other PAS programs -- specifically, English language projects, outreach to youth and USG exchange alumni, and educational advising. Despite budget constraints, Post has managed to bring native English-speaking visitors to most Corners. Beginning in the fall of 2008, Post initiated an Embassy speakers' program whereby we bring Embassy representatives to ACs to conduct programming and outreach to Greek youth. Post is also planning to use technology to supplement and improve AC programming and administration. For example, Post is planning to launch a Facebook page administered by the IRC to connect all American Corners and to reach out to youth through this increasingly popular application. Also, the IRC intends to organize web chats bringing together American elementary schools and junior high schools with groups of young Greeks using the facilities of the American Corners. The successful ECO Fan Club of the Hellenic American Union open to young people aged 7 to 15, combining fun with learning activities and environmental action, will be the first group to communicate with their American peers through the AC in the HAU.

13. On September 29, Post organized a workshop for AC directors; one of the outcomes of that workshop is that ACs have taken a renewed interest in programming and have also made progress in establishing regular reporting mechanisms, and coordinating with the Embassy on programs. It is worth mentioning that a successful English language program initiated by the IRC is reaching out to Greek youth using as venues not only high schools, but also the network of the six American Corners. The Greek Ministry of Education continues to be very supportive of this program, although it is unable to contribute financially.

14. The American Corners in Nea Philadelphia and Corfu still face some administrative problems. The AC in Corfu suffered the sudden

death of the library director (who also served as AC coordinator in 2008). However, both Corners have demonstrated renewed commitment to meeting program goals. We are also making considerable headway with the new director of the Cultural Center in New Philadelphia (who also supervises the municipal library and the AC), who has promised to be more cooperative than his predecessor.

2008 Statistics and Data

15. In 2008, the American Corners in Greece recorded the highest numbers of visitors and programs since the beginning of their operation:

- 18,182 visitors, 17,100 of whom were youth
- 37 programs total, 5 of which were offsite

More specifically, the following programs are worth mentioning:

- Corfu American Corner: Innovative multimedia approach including book reading, theatrical play and film showing to celebrate the birthday of Mark Twain (January 2008), attendance: 85.

- Hellenic American Union: Interactive lecture combined with trivia contest and film showing to commemorate Black History month (February 2008), attendance: (80). Movie Night with the Muppet Christmas Carol film (December 2008), attendance: 40.

- Sparti American Corner: Presentation of Black American Music covering its various music styles and how it contributed to world music (March 2008), attendance: 90.

- Nea Philadelphia American Corner: Greek American Fulbrighter connects with students and teachers in an interactive presentation on marine biology (May 2008), attendance: 50.

- Veria American Corner: Trivia contest for young library users becomes one of the most popular summer programs attracting more than

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hundred school children (June 2008), attendance: 40.

- Xanthi American Corner: Movie Night to commemorate Black History Month with screening of videotape "The March to Washington." (February 2008), attendance: 80. Book exhibit and paper show display on the environment at city of Xanthi major annual event attracting many hundreds young visitors at the International Children's Day.

Audience reached: As a general remark, this year all six American corners witnessed a big increase of younger audience ages 12 - 16 both in checking out books and using the reference services but also in program attendance. The average number of young people attending an AC program was 50 - 60 attendees.

Most popular materials: The 2008 Earth Day poster, the U.S. Elections/Civics Set of 48 titles, the 2008 Black History Month newsletter prepared by the Athens IRC. Also two IIP electronic journals (Dynamic English and World Youth: Building a Future) recorded wide distribution in all six American corners (over two hundred copies per AC).

Details for each Corner are included in the spreadsheet being sent via email.

16. There have been several successful programs this past year. On December 14, the American Corner in Xanthi hosted an outstanding performance of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" by 20 junior high school students. The students, who attend a regional public school, rehearsed for two months with their English teacher, who organized and directed the play. The performance attracted an enthusiastic crowd which included the Mayor of Xanthi, Ministry of Education representatives, English language teachers, students and parents.

17. On October 3, IRO Laura Kaspari-Hohmann gave a lecture at Ionian UniQ!QQ)QQ D)brary School to a group o& QQQQ Q"QQaries are facing today.

18. On October 1, the American Corner at the Hellenic American Union

hosted a lecture by Joseph Lambert, CEO of the Center for Digital Storytelling. Lambert presented the history and practice of his art to approximately 60 librarians and educators. From October 2 - 3, Lambert organized a workshop in the American Corner in Veria with a digital storytelling program. A group of 5 members of the library staff and 10 library users participated in the workshop. The Embassy's youth-oriented website, Mosaiko.gr, hosted an original interview with Lambert, promoting the program to its wide youth audience.

Media Coverage

¶9. Most ACs received good to very good local media coverage in 2008. There was significant coverage of all programs on the HAU and Veria Public Central Library websites. Our own Mosaiko.gr extensively covered the programs of all 6 American Corners in Greece.

Visits and Training

¶10. Every American Corner was visited at least once by a Mission staff member in 2008. PD staff visits to the ACs country-wide numbered at least 20 in 2008.

¶11. On September 29, the Athens Information Center hosted a workshop with the coordinators from the six existing American Corners in Greece. Discussions included brainstorming sessions on programming, potential speakers, marketing, and new media. We discussed the Embassy's Mosaiko.gr website, the IRC's English Language Program, and, through a DVC connection with Washington, AC Coordinator Barbara Conaty informed the participants about the latest developments in the AC program from Washington.

Core Characteristics of Corners

¶12. Details for each AC are included in the spreadsheet sent via e-mail.

2008 Sustaining Funds Report

¶13. In 2008, Post received \$22,995.13 FY08 sustaining funds from Washington which were used as follows:

¶A. Paper shows for 6 ACs: \$277.95 each. Total: \$1,667.71

¶B. Books for 6 ACs: \$2,277.90 each. Total: \$13,643.42

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¶C. \$5,000.00 grant to the Veria Public Library for a speaker on Digital Storytelling Workshop

¶D. \$2,684.00 for an AC director's workshop training in Athens

Total: \$22,995.13

¶14. In 2008, Post allocated \$4,450 to support the AC program in Greece.

2009 Sustaining Funds Request

¶15. Post requests \$58,340 in sustaining funds for FY09 to address AC needs as follows:

¶A. Periodicals for 6 Corners: \$800 each, total: \$4,800

¶B. Books and DVDs for 6 Corners: \$5,000 each, total: \$30,000

¶C. Story Telling presentations/workshops in Nea Philadelphia/Sparti/Veria/Xanthi including travel expenses for one escort: \$6,700

¶D. Regional training workshop/travel of Corner Directors: \$6,840

¶E. Speaker programming: \$4,000

¶F. Operating expenses (photocopying, mailing, etc.): \$1,000

¶G. Purchase of 6 television sets and 6 DVD players plus one computer and one printer: \$5,000

¶H. Combined Request for 6 Corners: \$58,340

Technology Needs

¶16. Equipment upgrades are an important part of this year's sustaining funds grant request. We would like to purchase new

televisions and DVDs for all our Corners that do not yet have them (Corfu, HAU, Nea Philadelphia), and to replace dilapidated or damaged equipment in Corners that do (Sparti, Xanthi, Veria). This equipment is vital for holding movie nights, which are among the most popular and easiest-to-organize activities conducted at the ACs. In addition, the AC in Xanthi needs a new computer, and one printer to support administrative, communication and programming needs.

Plan for the future, Strategy for improvement

¶17. A key component for 2009 programming will be the reinforcement of English Language Teaching (ELT) activities. Facilitated by advisors from the Greek Ministry of Education and Fulbright, IRC specialists will continue to organize meetings with English language teachers of primary and secondary education to promote the wealth of EL materials available that offer "American content." Post also plans to integrate AC programs into its Embassy Speakers Bureau to encourage Mission personnel to speak while visiting cities hosting American Corners.

¶18. Of special note is a series of workshops and presentations at four American Corners by a storyteller. After two successful presentations at the HAU and Nea Philadelphia ACs by artist Linda Gorham in 2006, there is a desire to extend this program to the rest of the ACs in Veria, Xanthi, and Sparti, and to conduct workshops for English language teachers in Athens (Nea Philadelphia) and Thessaloniki. Out of a two-week program (twelve program days), Linda Gorham will be scheduled for 6 program days in 4 ACs. The remaining four program days will take place in Greek elementary and high schools and the cost will be covered with Post funds.

¶19. Post also hopes to participate in a regional training program for AC directors in southern Europe, organized by IRO Laura Kaspari-Hohmann. The goal is to share best practices and discuss efforts to further support and energize AC programming. This program will highlight successes, discuss other new ideas, and encourage the AC directors of this region to further develop a network amongst themselves.

Compliance issues

¶20. All six American Corners were established with MOUs signed by the Embassy and the host institution, and all are posted on the AC Central database. The records are complete and up-to-date. Each AC is in compliance with core characteristics. Details are available on request.

¶21. Post's IRO has reviewed this plan and concurs.
SPECKHARD